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## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

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*National Organization for Public Health Nursing*

### A DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE SUPPRESSION OF TUBERCULOSIS

BY ALICE E. STEWART, R.N.

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A DOZEN years' experience in a tuberculosis sanatorium, where an overwhelming proportion of advanced cases demands admittance, in the city recording the highest mortality rate from tuberculous meningitis and all other forms of tuberculosis excepting pulmonary, brings one to the inevitable conclusion that the agencies for the discovery of tuberculosis are functioning below their best.

It is my belief that it is within the power of the nurse to be the chief agent in the suppression of tuberculosis. She is in a strategic position to observe constantly the segment of the community favorable to the development of the disease but her apparent failure to report early cases of tuberculosis and to arrange prophylactic care for children and contact cases, is deplorable.

Is the nurse to blame? Consider her training in any general hospital where medical, surgical and obstetrical technique are her major experiences. Does her present course equip her in any way for the detection of tuberculosis or for any active interest in its detection? Tuberculosis is barred from general hospitals; consequently there is no opportunity for practical observation of its activity. It is obvious the present system does not instruct in tuberculosis and its importance to the public health. Therefore, the peculiar technique necessary in tuberculosis nursing is unknown to thousands of nurses, who may have had excellent training otherwise.

If one contemplates the present loss and the cumulative effect of undiscovered cases of tuberculosis constantly developing into active disease and realizes that this cycle is repeated again and again simply because the nurse is unaware of what is passing before her eyes, no cost would seem too great to educate her to be ever on the alert for the prevention of tuberculosis infection developing into tuberculous disease. Fortunately, the cost is not great; we have only to interest nursing bodies in the problem and secure official coöperation for training places already equipped. I think I can prove this by citing the plan adopted by the United States Public Health Service.

It was due to the vision of the officials of the United States Public Health Service, who were conscious of the necessity for standardizing

data on tuberculosis and conveying instruction to the nurses responsible for the care of the ex-service men, that the first course of this kind was established. The first school was inaugurated at the United States Public Health Hospital, No. 60, at Oteen, North Carolina, by a four weeks' course during September, 1921. The United States Public Health Service generously admitted civilian nurses as well as the head nurses from the North Atlantic division of their own hospitals.

The choice of Oteen was important because it offered the fullest scope for the development of the course from theory to practice. On the practical side Oteen offered: first, housing facilities for the nurses attending the school; second, unlimited observation of tuberculosis in all stages; third, an expert staff for the director of the course to draft into service for demonstrations.

The United States Public Health Service, on the suggestion of the National Tuberculosis Association, appointed the writer to the interesting post of director of the first school at Oteen. The course considered not only the immediate relation of the nurse to the prevention and discovery of tuberculosis, but included also the study of the tuberculosis problem from the historical, social, medical and industrial aspects. The lectures were characterized by a definite scheme to stimulate the student to the practical application of the knowledge acquired theoretically.

The nurses were taught the difference between tuberculous infection and tuberculous disease with searching inquiry into the fundamental, supplemental and incidental factors in the treatment of tuberculosis. Standards for treatment in sanatoria, dispensaries and homes were discussed at length. Even the problem of the rehabilitation of the tuberculous patient involving the hazards of occupations, the vocational training and ultimate placement were taken up. Further lectures dealt with the organized campaign against tuberculosis and the prevention of tuberculosis from the standpoint of public health and of personal hygiene.

One of the important points emphasized constantly was the nurse's relation and responsibility in the suppression of tuberculosis. The course at Oteen reiterated the idea that the nurse was invaluable. This point was driven home in order that the head nurses might carry back to the hundreds of nurses under their supervision the dignity and importance of their work.

Therefore, the instruction analyzed the relation of nurses in sanatoria from the superintendent down to that of the instructor in occupational therapy, the procedure of nurses in dispensaries and clinics, the public health nurse in the homes with educational material

to combat fallacies and to inaugurate a general hygienic programme, and last of all the nurse as a part of an organized tuberculosis association.

The students at Oteen were marked on their attendance at lectures, their class attitude, on the quality of their notebooks and on their practical demonstrations. The average was so high that it seems safe to assume that tuberculosis can be made interesting to a varied group of individuals representing many methods of training.

It is confidently hoped that the Oteen experiment will be repeated in different parts of the country by the United States Public Health Service; but even a series for the head nurses of the entire Service, with the fortunate civilian nurses admitted to the course, could not supply instruction in tuberculosis to nurses in general.

Although the course at Oteen approximated the ideal as to equipment and to students, I know the method could be adapted to public health nursing groups throughout the country. The most effective way to secure such instruction for civilian nurses would be for the public health nursing associations and the state tuberculosis associations to rouse the state health authorities to the importance and feasibility of such a course. The use of state sanatoria for the course could be urged because sanatoria offer housing facilities as well as opportunities for the practical demonstrations essential. The students admitted should include state nurses, public health and private nurses. The course must be under the direction of an experienced woman, who is familiar with every aspect of tuberculosis as presented in the resumé of the lectures at Oteen. She must require the nurses to carry the theory into practice during the course, and be assured that they comprehend every technical detail.

No work for 1922 could be more important to the National Organization for Public Health Nursing and its associate organizations working for the public health than a nation-wide campaign to interest and educate nurses in the prevention and discovery of tuberculosis and the care of the tuberculous. Such a campaign would yield returns in enthusiasm and technical equipment, the two chief requisites for the tuberculosis nurse upon whom depends, in large measure, the eradication of the disease.

## ITEMS

### ENCOURAGEMENT

**I**T has been said that the city streets are the wards in which the Public Health Nurse works. Donors of hospital wards (things concrete, in other words) are not as difficult to find as donors of anything so intangible as scholarships.

So it is with particular pleasure that we learn of two funds, one of a \$35,000.00 fund—"The Harriet Hammond McCormick Scholarships," and the other of

\$5,000.00 of "The Albert H. Wolf Scholarship" fund, given to the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago. The annual incomes of these funds are to be used for scholarships "awarded competitively" and open to members of the Chicago staff. One of these scholarships will amount to \$1,200.00 annually, for "eleven months' study and research." The remaining income will provide for several minor scholarships "for short courses or traveling for any member of the nursing or office staff." We congratulate Miss Foley and her staff upon this splendid gift.

THE School of Hygiene and Public Health of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, has received from the Rockefeller Foundation an endowment of \$6,000,000 as an endowment and building fund. The School, since its establishment in 1918, has been maintained by the Foundation. The trustees of the University under the terms of this splendid gift will now take over all responsibility for the School and its development. This, we understand, represents the largest gift ever made by one organization to another.

#### NATIONAL AND STATE HEALTH LEGISLATION

ON February 1, 1922, appeared the first of a series of bi-weekly bulletins on State Health Legislation to be issued by the United States Public Health Service with the coöperation of the National Health Council. These bulletins represent "the first systematic attempt to issue in collected form impartial abstracts of current State Health Legislation." The subjects covered will include general public health, general sanitation (milk, food and drugs, water supply, sewage and housing), control of disease, tuberculosis, social hygiene, mental hygiene, medical practice, nursing and sickness insurance.

These bulletins are published in Washington and are edited by James A. Tobey, the Washington representative of the Council. At present the number of copies issued is limited to 200. Any one desirous of being on the mailing list for these bulletins should write to the United States Public Health Service, Washington, D. C.

The National Health Council will continue to publish its bi-weekly statements on National Health Legislation. It has recently issued five reports of great general interest,—one on the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, outlining the history and development, current work, and the Federal Child Labor Law and the Act for the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy. The other reports are in the Division of Vital Statistics of the United States Bureau of the Census, the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, the Division of School Hygiene of the United States Bureau of Education and a general report covering the health activities of the United States Government. A chart is included in this last mentioned report, showing the Federal activities which we think would be of great interest in class rooms and in nurses' clubs among other places. These reports can be had without charge from the National Health Council office, 411 Eighteenth Street, Washington, D. C. Information concerning the bi-weekly National Health Legislation statements may be obtained from the same source.

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#### CORRECTION

In January Mary V. Stephenson was appointed Superintendent of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and *not* Superintendent of Nurses as announced in the March *Journal*.